

DRAFT Webster Agricultural Commission Minutes
July 11, 2013

Attendees: Member Guy LaRochelle, Member Marty Bender, Member Susan Roberts, Alternate Member Susan Roman, Alternate Member Therese Larson, Secretary Sarah Chalsma, Select Board Member Mason Donovan

DISCUSSION:

Select Board Member Donovan met with the Agricultural Commission to introduce some projects that he felt the Commission might be interested in.

1. The Town of Webster is currently exploring their land assets. The Town owns 1.15% of the land in Webster through gifts or tax deeds. Many Town Committees, Boards, and Commissions are looking at these pieces of land to see if they may be of some use to the Town or the surrounding community. Can these plots of land be used for timber, crops, conservation, gravel, future cemetery area, agricultural education? The land will be offered for sale to any abutters. If there are any DES concerns, the Town will often refuse the land.

The idea put forth to the Ag Comm is to look at some of these parcels of land to see if they would be valuable for any sort of agricultural usage, specifically with the thought of a community garden area. The Commission was very interested in this idea, and after looking at the map of the land plots available, decided to focus in the Pillsbury Lake area, at least initially. The reasoning for choosing this area, other than the fact that there are many parcels open, is that many residents of this area do not have a lot of room on their own parcels of land to have a garden of much size. [Although the community gardens will be open to ALL residents of Webster.] Also, as water supply is an issue for a community garden, having it near the lake may be of some benefit. In the future, when plans are further along, the idea was raised to have some free workshops specifically about gardening before the planting season begins.

2. As a private citizen, Mason Donovan has been integral in the planning and running of Articulture here in Webster. This event, which occurs on the first Saturday of June, is a mixture of a local artists' fair and a farmer's market. Mason has enjoyed his role in organizing this event but is unable to continue due to time constraints. He asked if the Commission would be interested in taking over the running of this event. All members agreed that a single event, as opposed to a weekly farmer's market, seemed a lot more manageable. As Mason has run this fair for the past 2 years, all contacts are already in place for vendors, donations, performers, etc. Mason recommended that planning begin in November.

Further Ag Commission discussion focused on growing and garden education, especially for the children. Secretary Chalsma informed members that things were well under way in that arena - the kids planted vegetables and sunflowers on Earth Day in barrels donated by Member LaRochelle and Member Roberts.

ACTION:

Select Board Member Donovan: Contact Ray Scott, President of the Pillsbury Lake Association to let him know that there will be members of various boards and commissions that will be investigating parcels of land in the Pillsbury Lake area.

All Members: Go and check out plots of land around Pillsbury Lake, specifically plots on Deer Meadow Road and Newport Circle/Mount Vernon roads. Look at these plots for quality of land, ease in clearing, water access, and parking access. Have ideas/reports ready for next meeting.

Next meeting is Thursday, August 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Chalsma
Secretary